

OCCASIONAL
REFLECTIONS

ADDRESSED TO THE

People of *Great Britain*,

By a BYSTANDER.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. HERBERT, in the Strand.

M D C C L V I I .

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OCCASIONAL

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ADDRESS TO THE

People of Great Britain

By a Fugitive



LONDON:

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OCCASIONAL
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ADDRESSED TO THE
People of Great Britain.

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH You have already received Letters, Appeals and Addresses enough and to spare, yet I cannot forbear throwing my mite into the general collection ; it is at your service, and You may dispose of it as You think proper.

The

The glorious revival of publick spirit in our days, must afford the most pleasing prospects to every true lover of his country, to see traders neglect their private business, that they may attend to the concerns of the publick, and merchants forget to settle their books, that they may be at leisure to settle the affairs of the nation, is truly an instance of patriot zeal, which can hardly be equalled, and cannot be excelled.

Yet to my great surprize, our publick papers are still crying out of the depravity of the times, and lamenting in the most pathetic strains the degeneracy of the age.

What

What reason can be given for this complaint? Or, how shall we reconcile the history of the times with the descriptions of the times?

We allow that the world has been growing worse for these many ages: this is confirmed by the united testimony of historians and satyrists, who unanimously agree in describing their own times as worse than all that went before them, and at the same time foretell still greater depravity to take place in succeeding ages.

But though we are willing to receive what we are told both of the past and the present upon the Credit of these worthy
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personages, yet surely we may expect they will set some bounds to this growth in depravity.

Now I believe it will be found upon a fair computation, that however slow and imperceptible they make the progress of corruption, yet the world must certainly by this time be arrived at the *non plus ultra* of wickedness. And the periodical and daily Chronicles of our present times allow this to be really our case; according to them we have reached the utmost limit of degeneracy, and actually can advance no further in that road.

Former times saw virtue and vice contrasted like the intermixture of lights and shades in a beautiful picture; but our unhappy

happy times present nothing to our view but pure unmixed vice; this we must confess, is a frightful picture and sufficient to alarm our most serious apprehensions.

Yet even here we may pick up some crumbs of comfort, when we consider that as our corruption and degeneracy is already arrived at the highest pitch, we are secured against growing any worse: And in the second place, as all things are in a state of continual vicissitude and change, there is great reason to hope, that since we can make no further proficiency in vice, we shall now begin to think seriously of returning toward virtue; nay, I am persuaded that the happy change is already begun, and with this

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peculiarly pleasing circumstance, that whereas our declension from virtue was slow and imperceptible, we are now returning to it full speed.

This opinion is not founded upon the virtuous conduct of a few faithful abdiels, who may be supposed to have preserved their integrity in the midst of the general corruption: No, I appeal to the conduct of the multitude, the multitude formerly so tainted with corruption and depravity, have recovered their original rectitude, and have given the most evident proofs of their utter detestation and abhorrence of all manner of treachery and corruption, and have discovered the highest veneration and esteem for virtue and integrity.

How

How did every bosom burn with indignation at the report that Minorca was lost, either through treachery or misconduct ; it was in vain for the persons accused to protest their innocence, or desire you to suspend your censures till truth appeared.

You, GENTLEMEN, were as jealous of your national honour as Cæsar of his wife: to be suspected with You, was to be guilty ; You resolved that a British Ministry ought to be above all suspicion of corruption, and accordingly Addresses, Instructions, and every other method ordinary and extraordinary was employed to drive the suspected persons from the administra-

tion, even before any proof appeared of their guilt.

But, GENTLEMEN, this is not the only proof of the happy national reformation: Not contented with barely discovering your resentment against the remotest suspicions of corruption and misconduct, you have also given the most signal proof of your sincere attachment to virtue and integrity.

The warmth with which you espoused, and still continue to support the cause of the two eminent Patriots; as it can flow from none but the most noble motives, so it must convince all the world, that the antient British Spirit is again revived, and
ready

ready to act with all that vigour, which formerly raised the British name to the highest pitch of honour and renown.

I will be bold to say, that neither ancient Greece, nor Rome, ever bestowed such signal honours upon patriot worth as You have done.

They indeed raised altars to their patriots and heroes, but then it was at a time when idolatry was in fashion; whereas You, even in this enlightened age, when the adoration of deified mortals is forbidden, have shewn yourselves ready to go as great lengths in honour of patriot merit, when we consider that you have offered not only your freedoms, but your gold

gold and silver in honour of the two Patriots, surely your profound veneration for virtue and publick spirit can never more be called in question.

As the fervour of your patriotic zeal, and your spirited behaviour on this occasion, must fill all Europe with astonishment and admiration: You may be assured, that it will gain you not only the esteem but the veneration of foreigners, who must unanimously pronounce you, *a wise and prudent People*. The courage of our Allies (if we have any left) will be revived, and our enemies seized with terror and fear; all our schemes will be now planned with prudence, and executed with courage and resolution.

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But while all nations are thus agreed to applaud your generous resolutions, and in earnest expectation wait the consequences of the wonderful change ; how must they be surpris'd to hear, that even among ourselves, any persons should be found so strangely infatuated as to dispute the propriety of your conduct.

Whether this unpopular opposition arises from some remains of the old corrupt leaven ; or from involuntary error, is a point not easily determined : but as charity would incline us to the most favorable interpretation ; so prudence would persuade us, rather to attempt their cure by gentle methods, than drive them to despair by a rougher treatment.

We

We have found by experience, that calling names does no service, by long practice they are so habituated to bear ill usage that it takes no effect upon them.

Suppose, therefore, we were for once to alter our conduct, and so far condescend to their weakness, as to give them a fair hearing. This if it did no good could do no hurt; it would at least give a signal proof of our moderation and condescension, when we submit so far as to render a reason of our actions; if it be objected that this might prove a dangerous precedent, as tending to enslave British Liberty in the fetters of reason, let it be remembered that if reason favours us, it may be lawfully employed, and if upon
trial

trial we should be found deficient in argument, we can at any time maintain our proceedings in our own way by noise and clamour.

Now then when they ask what has the *Great Commoner* done to merit such distinguished honours? Why should we fret and chafe at the question instead of answering it.

It is true we cannot readily say what he has done; and therefore they cry victory, and assert that he has done nothing, because we cannot tell what he has done; but this is evidently putting the most ill-natured construction upon our silence, for it is rather to be supposed that his *doings*

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surpass all description, which at the same time that it accounts for our inability to tell what he has done, justifies our conduct, in the signal acknowledgments made of his inexpressible services.

But if it should be objected that this conclusion is rather too far fetched; suppose we allow what they contend for, that he really has done nothing. Will that be any reason for condemning our zeal in his service? No! on the contrary it will set our disinterested generosity in the strongest light, and prove that we honour virtue, purely for its own sake.

Let selfish nations reward ministers, in proportion to their services, *generous Britain's*

tain's has conferred the most signal honours, upon a ministerial virtue, from which she has received no benefit, and in all probability has none to expect; a clear proof that we distribute our favours without the view of either fee or reward.

But they have a more formidable objection still behind; they observe that nothing is so apt to spoil a man as flattery, that unmerited honours left him so high in his own conceit, that the view of the precipice below turns his head, and his fancied elevation only serves to render his fall more shameful.

But though we allow this to be generally the case, yet there is no necessity that it should always prove so.

Flattery sometimes does good as well as hurt.

Many a fool has been flattered into the conceit of a virtue he never possessed, and has acted from that conceit in the same manner as he would have done from a principle of real virtue.

It is a mistake therefore to suppose that flattery is always of prejudice, it may as readily prove of service; and we have great reason to hope, from the modest answers of our *Great Man*, that it will prove of signal service to him, and stimulate him to the most glorious deeds.

Having thus refuted such objections as I have yet heard advanced against our
late

late extraordinary resolutions, I shall now endeavour to prove that we did nothing without a good and sufficient reason.

The despisers of our *Great Man*, insist perpetually upon his inactivity; but if they will but reflect that it was winter weather, when he was called to the helm, they must be convinced that the inactivity ought to be charged upon the season, and not upon the minister; we ought therefore to consider, not, what he has done, but what he is capable of doing; now I hope to prove, that notwithstanding the severity of the season, our *Great Commoner*, has discovered a genius equal to the greatest undertakings: Which will appear if we consider.

I. His

1. His ingenuity in finding out an opposition, where no former minister had ever dreamed of looking for one.

2. The skill with which he managed the popular odium against the former ministry, and the inquiry into their conduct.

And in the third place, that there are strong reasons to suppose him possessed of a miraculous power,

As to the first point in which he displayed the superiority of his talents, we must consider, that however troublesome oppositions may sometimes prove to a minister, yet they afford the fairest opportunity

portunity for the display of superiour skill, which shines the brightest when most opposed, as any ordinary mariner can steer the helm in fair weather, but a skilful pilot is necessary to direct the course in a dangerous storm.

But unhappily for Mr. *P---tt*, there was no prospect of any opposition to encounter with, the corrupt ministers were all removed; the most considerable offices and places were filled with his own relations, and he was in the closest connection with that party which had cut out so much work for our former ministers.

What should our *Great Man* do in such a situation? An opposition was necessary

cessary to show the vast extent of his abilities, yet it was no easy matter to find one.

However the strangest opposition was at last discovered that Britain has seen for many years. An opposition from the Throne !

All were amazed at the strange discovery, that a K——g who from his first accession had ever made the good of his people, the chief object of his cares, should in the decline of life oppose the salutary measures of his patriot minister, was more than wonderful.

Had

Had any other minister pretended to such an opposition, we should certainly have rejected the improbable story as a ministerial trick or a political lye, but Mr. P---tt's character was above all suspicion, the tale was greedily swallowed, and upon the credit of this unnatural opposition, Mr. P---tt's character was established with the discerning multitude, and the highest popular honour's conferred upon the discarded statesman.

Now let us take a view of Mr. P---tt's management with regard to his predecessors.

It required no great parts indeed to render them the objects of popular resent-

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ment ;

ment; we are always sufficiently disposed to entertain any stories propagated to the discredit of another, and a Monitor or morning post are admitted as sufficient evidence against the most respectable character in the nation; but tho' it is an easy matter to circulate a calumny, it is very difficult to establish one; by the time it has made the round of our Coffee-houses and evening clubs, it begins to grow stale, we are tired of the old dish, and seek some fresh matter for slander.

It is no wonder therefore, that we readily admitted the charge of treachery against the ministry; the wonder is that we continued to believe it so long.

It

It was in vain that all means were tried to clear their characters; Mr. P---tt without once appearing in the affair, had the address to fix the charge in such a manner that it was absolutely out of their power to wipe it of.

It was industriously given out that his piercing eye had penetrated the whole mystery of the dark transaction, we were assured that he had discovered the very sum for which Minorca was sold, and could point out the persons who had received the shameful price; then our expectations were raised of impeachments, and of speedy justice to be executed upon the delinquents, in short the national flame was so judiciously supplied with

fresh fuel from time to time, that there was no hazard of its being extinguished, and Mr. P---tt had the satisfaction to see his predecessors popularly condemned without being brought to a trial; this was all he could either wish or desire, while they laboured under the heavy charge of such atrocious guilt, they were very unfit to be trusted with any publick charge; so that the minister had fully gained his ends by their condemnation.

But the publick had a further point in view.

We expected that punishment should always follow guilt, and therefore hoped that as our *Great Man*, had already sacrificed

ficed the characters and reputation of his predeceffors, he would be no more indulgent to their lives; but the gentle Mr. P---tt had no fuch fanguinary views, his intereft was concerned in deftroying their characters, but he could have no intereft in their blood, even fupposing their lives had been in his power: yet ftill it was neceffary to keep up the opinion of their guilt, and to nourifh the expectations of a trial, and a speedy execution of juftice.

Impeachments would have been the speedieft method; and had Mr. P---tt been poffeffed of fuch evidences as we fupposed, it would be no eafy matter to fay what could have prevented an impeachment,

ment, but our patriot was too prudent to venture upon such a measure without evidence.

The way of inquiry, was more tedious, but it was safer for the minister; the preparations for this inquiry would consume some considerable time; and when these were over, yet it might still be in the power of the minister by dextrously proposing other business, to retard this inquiry as long as he pleased, and thus to deprive the persons accused of all possibility of clearing their characters.

Accordingly the preparations for this long expected inquiry were commenced; and a number of Extra Clerks employed
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in transcribing the necessary papers, which as it was feeding the hungry and cloathing the naked, was certainly both a good and great work in this season of scarcity and distress.

However the preparatives were at last, dispatched, and by some means or other, the desired inquiry was pushed, in such a manner, that it was impossible to evade it, and now our *Great Man* saw himself on the brink of losing even his last resource; his situation was not only delicate, but to appearance desperate.

But in this dangerous crisis, when even *we* were beginning to give up our favourite; the *Great Commoner* found means to
extri-

extricate himself by a new and unexpected stroke in politicks.

He had reason to be confident of his power and influence over us, we had obsequiously condemned his predecessors without evidence, and now Mr. P---tt determines to acquit them in the same manner.

It is whispered that the D— of N—e was willing to join interests with Mr. P---tt then it is rumoured that N——e was a very honest well inclined man, who had been abused by a parcel of Sycophants.

For some time we were at a loss what to think, not that we had any thought,
of

of rebellion against our *Orator*, but he had not yet delivered his commands in such positive terms as to prevent a possibility of mistake, at length we were relieved from our uncertainty, an anonymous letter openly invites the D—— of N——e to unite with Mr. P---tt, and at the same time graciously clear his heart at the expence of his head : the obsequious publick submit to the will of their lord and master, and N——e is instantly an honest man, even before the inquiry was finished, nay before it was well begun.

Whether our *Great Man*, will extend his charity to H——e and A——n time must discover, but we may be confident that he will never refuse to do a good

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natured action when he can find his interest in it.

And now we may be assured that N—e will in gratitude for favours received, lend a helping hand to restore his generous friend to his former authority and credit: Even if we farther reflect with what art the Maidstone Letter and every complaint concerning America, have been intirely dropped.

The greatest enemies of Mr. P——tt must certainly acknowledge that he discovered extraordinary abilities in the management of this political farce.

But

But as if all this was but a small thing with this truly *Great Man*, we are bid to expect still greater wonders.

A letter in the London Evening-Post prepares us for something more than miraculous, when he tells us, that "Virtue and Vice are extreams that without mediocrity connections, can never meet in a central point, but if the nearest lines can by any means be brought to co-incide, the amiableness of virtue will certainly have the advantage of its opponent, and absorb it in its vortex."

It is no easy matter to find out the meaning of this perspicuous paragraph,

or

or indeed to find out whether it has a meaning or not.

Virtue and vice are generally understood to be extremes as irreconcilable as good and evil, light and darkness ; and we may certainly conclude that when we see virtue and vice united in the same centre, we shall be witnesses of a miracle, more stupendous than any recorded either in sacred or profane history.

If our *Great Man* can accomplish this arduous task, we may venture to say, that for the future no power whatever will be able to oppose him : No doubt but our expectations must be raised to see what will

will be the consequence of this strange concentration, and what wonderful compound will be produced from the union of virtue and vice ; it is impossible at present to divine, by what name it must be called, and we must wait with patience till the same power which gives it existence, shall think proper to fix a name to it.

Mean time let no presumptuous mocker offer to insinuate, that, if our *Great Man's* virtue, can so readily be brought to unite in the same centre with vice, it must certainly be of a very vicious nature ; but rather let us hope that our *Great Man* is possessed of some miraculous powers by which he
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can change not only the nature of men but the nature of things.

These striking evidences of the abilities and power of the *Great Commoner*, must undoubtedly justify our zeal in the eyes of all unprejudiced persons, though if it were necessary many more reasons for our conduct might be added, and all equally good.

But lest some scrupulous persons should take offence at the levity with which a subject of so serious a nature has been treated, I shall conclude with offering a few sober reflections to your serious consideration.

No

No doubt, GENTLEMEN, as your freedoms are your own property, you may confer them on whom you please, and may make the present in boxes of such metal and make, as you may judge proper; but when we see Addreffes made to private subjects, and their gracious Responses received with all the veneration and respect due to an answer from the T——e, does not this look like a mimicry of royalty not very decent, if at all allowable in a subject?

Must not every measure which tends to exalt a private person beyond the rank of a subject, at the same time tend to depress the S——n and tarnish the lustre of the Crown?

Is

Is not the publick concerned to support the dignity of the Crown, since it is in fact the dignity of the State?

Must not whatever renders the Crown mean and contemptible, at the same time reflect dishonour on the State, both at home and abroad?

If then we pursue measures tending to introduce anarchy and confusion, by raising a subject to a level with the S——n, by appearing in opposition to the lawful authority of the government, and seeking to subject the administration, to the caprice of the inconstant and fantastical multitude; do we not proclaim our own folly

ly and imprudence, and render the nation both the jest and contempt of foreigners?

But when this phenomenon appears in the reign of a P—e, who has merited a very different treatment, do we not prove our ingratitude to be equal to our folly?

Has his Majesty ever since his happy accession, made the least attempt upon our national liberties and priviledges, or ever violated any of our publick charters and immunities?

Has any man been robbed of his private property by the King?

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Has

Has the course of law been perverted or interrupted by the Crown?

Has justice ever been denied to the meanest subject under his Majesty's government?

Has the King ever refused any Bills calculated for the encouragement of trade, the extension of our commerce either foreign or domestic, or intended to promote the good of the publick in any other shape?

Has the publick protection been denied to our merchants or traders either abroad or at home?

Has

Has the King ever discouraged the subjects from bringing their Addresses and Petitions to the T—e?

What reason can we give for withdrawing our confidence from the T—e to place it in a popular *Orator*?

What knowledge have we of *this Man*? Are we acquainted either with his person or his abilities? Is our zeal according to knowledge, or do we proceed upon hearsay evidence?

Are we any better acquainted with the persons we have so violently condemned, than with the *Man* whose cause we have so warmly espoused?

Is there not reason to suspect that while we are condemning the one, and applauding the other, and at the same time absolute strangers to their persons and real characters, we are judging without evidence, and therefore are in danger of bringing in a false verdict, as well in respect of the persons ignorantly condemned, as of the Man whom we have delighted to honour?

While strangers, to the principles, the qualifications, and very probably even to the persons of the rival Statesmen, how shall we determine, Who is most able and willing to serve his King and country at this dangerous crisis?

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On the other hand : Has not the King a personal knowledge of the Ministers who have been employed under him ? Has he not had a trial of their abilities and zeal in his service ?

Which then is most reasonable, that his Majesty, who knows the persons, and has had a trial of their abilities and fidelity, should appoint his own Ministers ? or We should chuse among persons whom we do not know ?

When these few questions are fairly answered, our late extraordinary proceedings will probably appear in their true colours.

Mean

Mean time if our political frenzy is so far abated as to allow any leisure for serious reflection, let us consider whether the measures we pursued were likely to retrieve our losses.

I shall not enter into any dispute about the conduct of the administration in relation to Minorca, that has already been examined by the proper Judges, and it is no great compliment to the representatives of Great Britain, to say, that their resolutions ought to have more weight than the voice of Monitors and Morning-posts : I would only observe that in our judgment of that affair we were in all probability directed by the event, without any consideration of the measures.

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Had the event been prosperous, in all probability the administration would not only have passed uncensured, but would have received the approbation of the publick for their just and prudent measures ; as that was unfortunate, the very same measures were condemned which in the other case would have been applauded.

At present we all know that the preparations in Bretagne and Normandy were only a feint to cover their real design against Minorca ; but had a stronger fleet been sent out more early for the Mediterranean, and a body of French troops afterwards landed in Britain or Ireland ; in
that

that case it would have been as clear that the preparations in Provence were only a feint to cover their real design against these kingdoms.

It is very easy to distinguish between a feint and the real design when once the event has cleared it up; but it is a very difficult matter to say where the blow is intended, before we are instructed by the event.

But the Advocates of our *Great Commander* have a charge still in reserve against his predecessors: Supposing them neither weak nor wicked, they were at least unlucky; and therefore unfit to direct the affairs of the publick.

The

The Romans, a wise and warlike people, paid great regard to lucky men and lucky names, and Britain ought to follow their example.

Very well, what luck is in Mr. P---tt's name, or what luck had we under his administration? We suffered pretty severely in our shipping, during that period, which I suppose must be charged to the luck of the administration, and not to their misconduct; be it so, will not that prove as strong an argument for their dismissal, as the loss of Minorca was for the removal of their predecessors.

But, GENTLEMEN, are we really to lose our senses with Minorca? Are we to

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go on changing our ministers, till we meet with a lucky administration ?

This scheme may perhaps suit the changeable multitude who are always fond of novelties, but it is scarce consistent with reason and good sense, besides what successes shall be deemed sufficient to constitute a lucky ministry, or what misfortunes will denominate them unlucky ?

We are at present engaged in a dangerous war with a powerful enemy: the events will in all probability be various and uncertain, are we to change the ministry upon every miscarriage ? In that case we shall probably be favoured with several changes within the year.

But

But are we likely to mend our affairs by thus quarrelling with Providence, as well as with our King and the ministry upon every unprosperous event.

It is too common a case with mankind, to lose their temper upon meeting with disappointments ; when we are injured or fancy ourselves so, and cannot execute our revenge upon the authors of the injury, our passion must have vent somewhere, our innocent domestics perhaps even inanimate beings, or any other object which happens unfortunately to come in our way, are sure to feel the effects of our resentment.

The case is the same with the publick, when unprosperous events rouse the resentments of the multitude, and they have it not in their power to be revenged of the authors of their losses, the storm is sure to fall upon the ministry. But does this in any shape better our own affairs, or does it in the least distress the enemy? On the contrary it affords him opportunities for fresh triumphs, while we are disabled by passion from attending to our own interests, or taking the necessary measures for opposing his progress.

In war it is necessary to be able to bear defeats as well as victories with an even
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temper ; but as equanimity is a virtue seldom found in a multitude, there is the greater necessity for it in a ministry, that they may be able not only to oppose the designs of the enemy with prudence and resolution, but also to bear with the inevitable discontents and murmurs of the people at home.

To conclude : As his Majesty engaged in the present necessary war, not from any motives of private ambition, but for the protection of our colonies and security of our commerce ; it is our interest as well as our duty to support him in the prosecution of it : and instead of quarrelling with him, about unknown and untried

tried patriots; to strengthen his hands by assisting the men, whom he knows to be fit, and shall chuse to conduct the publick affairs at this critical season.

In this way we may hope by the blessing of Providence upon his Majesty's arms, to see an honourable conclusion of the present dangerous war; which we can scarce expect to procure by the other method.

F I N I S.

